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# Believers seeking answers to the unexplainable

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An ancient Mayan calendar, divided into 13 heaven and nine hell years, terminated the ninth hell year on Aug. 16 and prophesized the return of Quetzalcoatl, the Mayan god of peace, on Aug. 17.

Several area residents meditated on peace and enlightenment during the harmonic convergence at the Christine Meditation Center, Willard, Minn. Thousands gathered Aug. 16 at sacred sites throughout the world, including Mount Shasta in California; Goat Island by Niagara Falls; Glastonbury, the English city of King Arthur; and the Pyramid of the Sun, San Juan de Teotihuacan, Mexico.

**"People in the Eau Claire area** were into metaphysical spirit and personal spiritual development before the New Age movement surfaced in the area," according to Linda Marie Rogers of 2409 Rudolph Road.

Rogers is one of several local residents who meet once a month to discuss books about the metaphysical and self-awareness.

"Metaphysical just means anything that is not explainable — anything beyond proven sciences," she said.

At other meetings individuals work on developing their psychic abilities or sending universal messages of love and energy through a spiritual healing circle. For instance, they explore psychometry, garnering impressions of a person from jewelry or other items.

The women — only a couple of men are involved — have different reasons for their interest.

Nancy, not her real name, once had a paranormal experience in which she saw a woman's form bending over her husband's body. The form disappeared when she tried to wake him. Other people have had unexplainable sensations in her mother's house in Minneapolis, she said.

"I kind of chalked it up to imagining things," she said. Later, she talked to a psychic student and changed her mind.

In another instance, she saw a form that resembled "a cloud of bugs," which she found out was a spirit traveling out of the physical body, she said.

She questions shutting out all but the physical experience.

**For Paula,** not her real name, interest in the metaphysical developed 10 years ago after an uncle's death. She is interested in the healing circle that directs spiritual energy to others.

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— Linda Marie Rogers

Reincarnation is studied by Paula and others. She noted that the concept of reconciliation and forgiveness relates to other religion practices.

A reincarnation concept, it was explained, holds that souls learn from their experiences in successive lives until they evolve to a high enough consciousness to be with God.

Their actions determine fates in future lifetimes. For instance, if one murders in this life, one is murdered in the next.

By striving toward perfection, people become less judgmental, Paula said. "I have yet to meet the perfect person."

**Anita Manny of Cadott,** who also believes in reincarnation, has taken a further step. She was hypnotized by a psychic and taken back to past lives, called regressions, she said.

In fact, Manny and the psychic who took her through past life regressions are being considered as guests for the "Oprah Winfrey" show, she said.

A psychic, in giving a reading, may charge nothing or up to $150 or more, the women said. They noted that not all psychics are reliable.

Manny said that she has been taken back to eight lifetimes. During the regressions, "you are that person," she said.

The lifetimes have included such experiences as being a male overseer at the Egyptian pyramids and teaching religion on the lost continent of Atlantis, she said. The experiences were so realistic that she could describe the inside of the pyramid, she said.

In another lifetime, she was a male reporter in England in the 1600s, she said. During that lifetime she stabbed and killed her parents — who have assumed identities in this life as her husband and her sister, she said.

Her past-life regressions have helped her deal with fears, Manny said. She has a fear of stairs and discovered that during a past life she had fallen down stairs and been killed, she said.

How do those who have been murdered or injured in a past-life regression feel toward the aggressor now? One person who figured in one of Manny's past-life regressions said that if something happened to her, "I probably had it coming."

Often people who survived near-death experiences will talk about seeing their lives pass before them, Manny noted. She believes people choose the lessons they will learn during a lifetime, she said.

Manny and her husband believe in reincarnation. Her daughter, a "good Catholic," has a little interest in this, she said.

Nancy said her husband is not a believer, but he accepts her activities as long as she doesn't go to extremes or "it costs too much," she said.

**Rogers had a belief system** encompassing reincarnation even while in high school, she said. "I chose to share that with very few people because of criticism."

She also had psychic experiences such as dreams that foretold an experience before she lived it, she said. She attempted to learn more about her abilities but later blocked them out and joined a fundamentalist religious organization that found these beliefs unacceptable, she said.

Rogers "came in touch with the unconditional love of God through Christian faith." She later attended a Florida retreat that changed her life.

One speaker who described herself as a born-again Christian interpreted instances of reincarnation in Scripture, she said. She feels less guilt in her life because of the concept that people's lives are predetermined, she said.

**Some of the individuals** are interested in communicating with spirits.

Manny once had a vision in which a distant relative who allegedly had committed suicide asked her to tell his parents that his death was an accident. Afterward, she saw a picture of him with the same outfit and motorcycle as in the vision, she said.

All people have psychic abilites, she observed.

The metaphysical field encompasses a do-your-own-thing spirit that respects all views. There is not an organized body telling individuals what to believe, Rogers said.

Many of the individuals attend churches and believe in God.

"I knew there was more to life than churches taught," Manny said.

She believes that churches teach people to fear God as a control factor while metaphysics stresses a loving God, she said.

Her beliefs are not a religion but a way of life, she said. Through her studies she has learned to care more about others, she said.

Some views are difficult for others to understand. While Shirley MacLaine received negative reaction for her television movie, "Out on a Limb," Rogers said the actress was not being blasphemous. Some believe in the concept that "we are all part of God and therefore God is part of us."

**One woman said** that she likes being part of a support group exploring the metaphysical because "they don't think I'm crazy." She had questioned herself, but now has a better understanding, she said.

There will always be debunkers because society has a logical belief system, Rogers said.

The Monroe Institute in Faber, Va., strives to prove the existence of the metaphysical. It researches altered states of consciousness and out-of-body experiences. It was founded by Robert Monroe, a sound specialist and author of "Journeys Out of the Body."

Monroe, using radio technology, created a process called hemispheric synchronization to induce a state of consciousness by creating vibrations that the human ear would not normally pick up, said Laurie Bieze of 333 Lincoln Ave.

Bieze visited the private educational institute 1½ years ago. She noted that it is one of the few facilities studying altered states of consciousness that is not run by the government.

**She learned about the institute** in Omni magazine and participated in research there. Her experiences included meditation sessions in a controlled environment that were later discussed with other participants.

One unique experience was a sensory deprivation condition in which participants were in a saline solution in a black box that did not allow the body to experience any stimulus.

She learned there is nothing to fear in the universe except fears that people conjure up and that most negativity is created by human beings.

She described her time at the institute as one of the most outstanding experiences of her life. "It sticks with you."